

**READINGS AND REFLECTION  
FOR THE 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

<https://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/070920.cfm>

**FIRST READING - FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM 12:13,16-19**

You, alone of all the gods, care for all and have not condemned unjustly.  
Your justice has its source in strength.  
Your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all.  
You show your strength when your sovereign power is questioned  
and you expose the insolence of those who know it.  
You have only to will and your power is there.

Yet, you are mild in judgement. You govern us with great lenience.  
You have taught a lesson to your people  
how virtuous people must be kindly to their neighbours.  
You have given your sons the good hope  
that after sin you will grant repentance.

The Word of the Lord.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM FROM PSALM 80: 2-3, 15-16**

**RESPONSE: Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.  
Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading.

**R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship you, O LORD, and glorify your name.  
For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.

**R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.  
Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant.

**R. Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

## **A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8: 26 - 27**

Brothers and sisters:

The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness;  
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.  
The one who searches hearts  
knows what is the intention of the Spirit,  
because he intercedes for the holy ones  
according to God's will.

The Word of the Lord.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;  
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.  
Matthew 11:25

## **A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 13:1-23**

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying:  
"The kingdom of heaven may be likened  
to a man who sowed good seed in his field.  
While everyone was asleep his enemy came  
and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.  
When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.  
The slaves of the householder came to him and said,  
'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?  
Where have the weeds come from?'  
He answered, 'An enemy has done this.'  
His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'  
He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds  
you might uproot the wheat along with them.  
Let them grow together until harvest;  
then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters,  
'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning;  
but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

He proposed another parable to them.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed  
that a person took and sowed in a field.

It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.

It becomes a large bush,

and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.’”

He spoke to them another parable.

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast

that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour

until the whole batch was leavened.”

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables.

He spoke to them only in parables,

to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

*I will open my mouth in parables,*

*I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.*

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house.

His disciples approached him and said,

“Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

He said in reply,

“He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,

the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom.

The weeds are the children of the evil one,

and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire,

so will it be at the end of the age.

The Son of Man will send his angels,

and they will collect out of his kingdom

all who cause others to sin and all evildoers.

They will throw them into the fiery furnace,

where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

**REFLECTION**from Sr Patricia Stevenson (*Josephite*)

How should we pray? Even St Paul, with his long Jewish tradition of liturgical prayer and praying the Psalms, says it is difficult to answer this question. St Paul had learned that Christian prayer was Trinitarian; there is a deep inner connection between the Holy Spirit and ourselves as people who pray. Paul wants us to reflect on how we pray and what we pray for.

Paul calls Christians as sons and daughters of God to be led by the Spirit. The Spirit is our mentor and model enabling us to cry “Abba Father” instead of cowering in fear like a stranger uncertain of a welcome. He describes our partnership with the Spirit as a key to our prayer. We are invited to have the same relationship with the Spirit that Jesus had. This union with the Spirit enabled Paul to be faithful in the pain and struggles of his life.

One of the gifts of the Spirit is to learn to pray and about prayer. The Spirit intercedes for us. God reads the heart; we do not need words for this loving communion. Psalm 42:7 speaks of ‘deep calling to deep.’ Mystics had metaphors for this communion and prayer as a spiritual marriage.

Our lack of trust in God and in ourselves holds us back. Old patterns of thinking can dominate us. The writer of Wisdom speaks of the power of God. Yet, we may be more used to others’ ‘power over’ us than trusting in God’s ‘creative power’. The offspring of God’s power is justice and then mercy. God teaches us that the just person is a kind person. Unfortunately, we may forget the intimacy of the Spirit’s Presence within us and allow our own fearfulness or failures to colour our readings of scripture. There are also many who preach a vengeful God out of their own wounded history. So, our trust wavers.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds encourages us in how we deal with sin. Should we eradicate it? Jesus tells the disciples and us that we may not be the best judges for distinguishing wheat from weeds; how can we presume to judge the hearts of others. Rather, let us leave the judgements to God. Kindness demands that we not be quick in judging wrongdoers. In this story, our focus is often on the weeds being burnt rather than the grain being useful!

We may need to be aware of the fragile self-esteem of those who suffer the harsh criticism of others, and so they need our intelligent reassurance. God reads people’s hearts; judging and condemning are not our call. With Paul, let us learn to pray as adult disciples.